

Chair Beyer, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment,

My name is Dolores Martinez and I live in Vale, Oregon. I urge you to vote yes on House Bill 2475 A as it currently stands and move it forward to the Senate floor with a do pass recommendation. Please do not adopt the "-A11" amendments, which would defeat a major purpose of this bill by substantially limiting intervenor funding for environmental justice stakeholders and existing Public Utility Commission intervenors like the Citizens' Utility Board.

2020 and 2021 have brought many hardships and challenges to Oregonians, and energy burden was already a major issue before the pandemic struck. Low-income communities, especially those living in rural parts of the state as well as Black, Indigenous, and people of color, have the highest rates of energy burden in Oregon. House Bill 2475 Act will allow the Public Utility Commission to adopt rate structures that help solve the issue of unaffordable energy bills while also removing barriers to communities who wish to offer input on energy decision making in Oregon.

I support this law because the positive impact it will bring to all our communities. It is essential that we establish a standard for a quality of life that does not include the loss of energy use and without concern on how to pay energy bills.

My work has allowed me to work closely with the community and listen to their needs, it has broken my heart to hear from people who have faced the energy burden, having to go cold during the winter because they do not turn on the heating to decrease their energy costs, families who have late bills because they do not have enough to cover all expenses which leads them to make difficult decisions regarding their budget and energy use. This situation causes families to live with limited energy use to avoid high spending that impacts their needs economically.

I am sharing a personal experience. I am a mother of 2 daughters, and we are 4 people in the home, my energy expenditures have increased a lot, to the point that I had to resort to payment arrangements to be able to cover my energy bills that were between \$500 to \$600 per month, which led me to adjust my budget and make cuts in some other expenses to pay the energy bill. I like many families, many in more difficult positions face this same situation, especially now when families spend more time at home, that children attend school online and stay at home all day, energy use becomes more vital and challenging at the same time for many low-income families. It is unjust to have to choose between missing a meal and paying for energy. Those of us who live and must limit energy use, in fear of not being able to pay their energy bill.

It has been a very difficult year for everyone because of the pandemic, this has shown us the needs and challenges facing all of Oregon especially low-income communities.

I hope you agree on how important it is for all Oregonians including rural and low-income communities to have access to efficient and affordable energy.

Passing this HB 2475 Act would help the utility commission develop programs that provide financial assistance and discounts on the services they provide to help reduce energy expenditures on low-income families, bringing financial relief, peace of mind of being able to use energy without worry of having to cover their expenses, and provide opportunities for Oregon families to improve their lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2475 A, which passed the House of Representatives with bipartisan support. Please pass this bill as-is onward to the Senate floor for a vote with a do pass recommendation.

Sincerely,

Dolores Martinez, Vale, OR